

## **Soil Judging A County Tradition in Clay County**

In a concentrated effort by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Clay County 4-H members, and the FFA chapters from Clay County High School and Hermitage Springs High School, soil judging has become a county tradition in Clay County. A plan was developed by all the aforementioned organizations for one simple goal—Tennessee Soil Judging Champions.

In 2003, the Clay County 4-H soil judging team coached by Phillip Dixon, USDA-NRCS and Randall Kimes, UT Extension Service won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the senior Soil Judging team representing Tennessee at the national land judging competition in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

In 2004 the coaches had a planning meeting and decided to include the FFA Directors for the two county high schools as coaches. The 4 coaches prepared their teams with one goal in mind...to win the state competition and represent Tennessee in Oklahoma again.

The teams began with 80 students and were scaled down to 45 students. At each contest the teams from Clay County were prepared and won the contests again and again. The final contest was held in Murfreesboro with 20 teams attending.

Four of these teams would win or place second and would then go to Oklahoma to represent Tennessee. Two of the four teams competing in Oklahoma will be from Clay County and a bonus team from Clay County will also be going.

Clay County achieved their goal to go back to Oklahoma. This year instead of 4 students competing, 12 Clay County students will compete in this national land judging contest.